



Supervisor
Mark Ridley-Thomas
Los Angeles County • Second District
<http://Ridley-Thomas.LACounty.gov>

TO: Community Stakeholders
FROM: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
RE: How to Get the Crenshaw/LAX Rail Line We Deserve

SHOW UP

Show up to the Metro Board Meeting to express your support of the Ridley-Thomas motion.

Thursday, May 26, 2011
Metro Full Board Meeting
9:00 AM
Metro Board Room, 3rd Floor
One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

Transportation will be provided. RSVP to Melissa Hernandez at 213-974-2222 or MIHernandez@bos.lacounty.gov. Buses will depart from the West Angeles Parking Lot located at 30th and Crenshaw.

LINK UP

Visit our website at <http://ridley-thomas.lacounty.gov/>. Under the "Issues" tab click "Transportation". You will find additional resources and a link to the motion and organizing flyer.

Share information with your networks (e-blast, blogs, etc.).

Send a letter to the Editor (LA Times, LA Sentinel, Our Weekly, The Wave, LA Watts Times, etc).

SPEAK UP

Support the Ridley-Thomas Metro Board motion to include a station in Leimert Park at Vernon Avenue and underground the train from 48th to 59th Streets through Park Mesa Heights instead of running the train at street level (at grade).

- Equitable public transportation service with a Leimert Park station
- Safe service with an tunnel underground through Park Mesa Heights
- Maximize job creation and economic development potential in the Crenshaw corridor
- Address local community concerns
- Prevent traffic congestion on Crenshaw Boulevard in residential neighborhoods

SIGN UP

Sign the petition to show your support for a yes vote by the Metro Board. Petitions should be returned to Melissa Hernandez, Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, 500 West Temple, Room 866, Los Angeles, CA 90012 or by email to MIHernandez@bos.lacounty.gov

Send a letter of Support/E-mail to the Metro Board.

E-mail your comments for the record to Michele Jackson, Metro Board Secretary, at JacksonM@metro.net.

**Motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Measure R Project Delivery Committee
April 21, 2011**

**Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor: Leimert Park/Vernon Station and
Undergrounding Park Mesa Heights**

The Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor project is the first major transit project managed by Metro to be financed primarily by the half cent sales tax on purchases in Los Angeles County (Measure R). Upon completion, it will serve all County residents by providing a rail transit connection to Los Angeles International Airport. Voters along the Corridor were among the strongest constituencies to vote in support of this tax.

In public meetings conducted by Metro, the residents of View Park, Leimert Park and Park Mesa Heights strongly favored two design elements: undergrounding the segment of the alignment from 48th to 59th Streets within the City of Los Angeles and including a Leimert Park Station at the intersection of Vernon Avenue and Crenshaw Boulevard to service this historic neighborhood.

A Metro study (Park Mesa Heights Grade Separation Analysis, June 2010) concluded that a below grade alignment would:

- 1) Improve travel time for all passengers to LAX airport;
- 2) Increase ridership on the line by 700 passengers per day, a 4% increase;
- 3) Reduce potential safety concerns at schools and other sensitive uses;
- 4) Minimize disruption to local businesses; and
- 5) Prevent gridlock on surface streets.

Inclusion of these two design elements is critical to ensure that this Measure R project is built in a manner that is both responsive to community concerns and does not miss an opportunity to serve some of the most historic neighborhoods in the region.

Measure R includes a variety of projects and categories with the overall intent of improving mobility in the region. The Federal government has taken note of this transit project with its award of a Transportation Infrastructure, Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) Loan last summer. Incorporating these final two elements in the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor will ensure the maximum potential for providing a rail transit connection to the airport to all Los Angeles County, relieving congestion, improving air quality and promoting economic development for a community that whole-heartedly endorsed Measure R.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE METRO BOARD:

1. Redirect monies to fund the inclusion of a Leimert Park/Vernon Station and undergrounding the segment of the alignment from 48th to 59th Streets within the City of Los Angeles, for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor.
2. Consider potential funding sources including, but not limited to, Expo Measure R funds for the “substitute project”, Measure R Green Line to LAX funds, Arbor Vitae interchange project funds and surplus property sales along the alignment.
3. Amend the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor project to include the Leimert Park/Vernon Station and undergrounding the segment of the alignment from 48th to 59th Streets as a part of the Base Project.
4. Authorize, if needed, the release of a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report.

PETITION TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR A YES VOTE BY THE METRO BOARD AT THEIR MAY 26, 2011 MEETING TO BUILD THE RIGHT CRENSHAW/LAX LIGHT RAIL LINE

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge the Metro Board to vote yes on May 26, 2011 to add a Leimert Park station and run the train below ground through the Park Mesa Heights neighborhood on the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line.

Printed Name	Signature	Address & Phone	Email	Date

Return this petition to Melissa Hernandez by Wednesday, May 18, 2011 to MHHernandez@bos.lacounty.gov or fax it to (213) 680-3283 or mail to Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, 500 West Temple Avenue, Room 866, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Please call Melissa Hernandez at 213-974-2222 if you have any questions.



Supervisor

Mark Ridley-Thomas

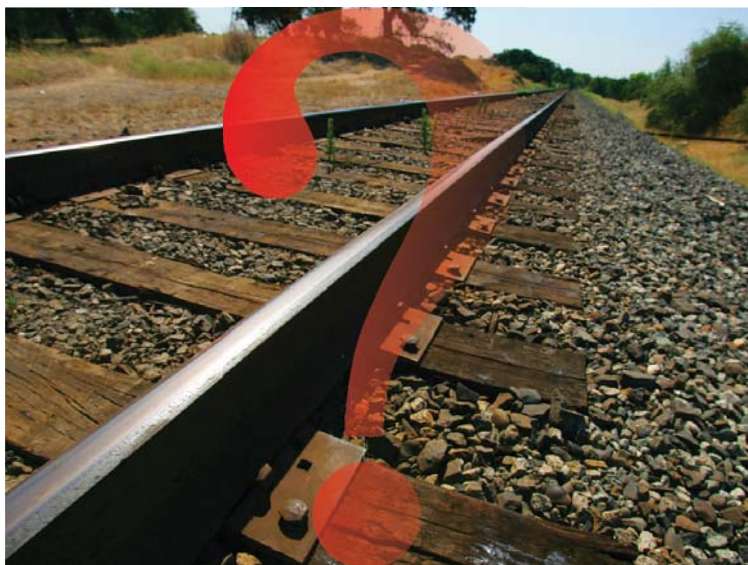
Los Angeles County Second District

<http://Ridley-Thomas.LACounty.Gov>

CRENSHAW'S FUTURE IS ON THE LINE

Will there be a station at Leimert Park?

Will the train go underground at Park Mesa Heights?



FINAL DECISIONS

**WILL BE MADE
BY THE
METRO
BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

**Thursday, May 26, 2011
at 9:00 AM**

(Full Board Meeting)

**Metro Board Room, 3rd Floor, One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012**

Please RSVP your attendance to **Melissa Hernandez** at MIHernandez@bos.lacounty.gov or at **213-974-2222**.

Transportation will be provided

RSVP is required

YOUR ATTENDANCE IS REQUESTED



Supervisor

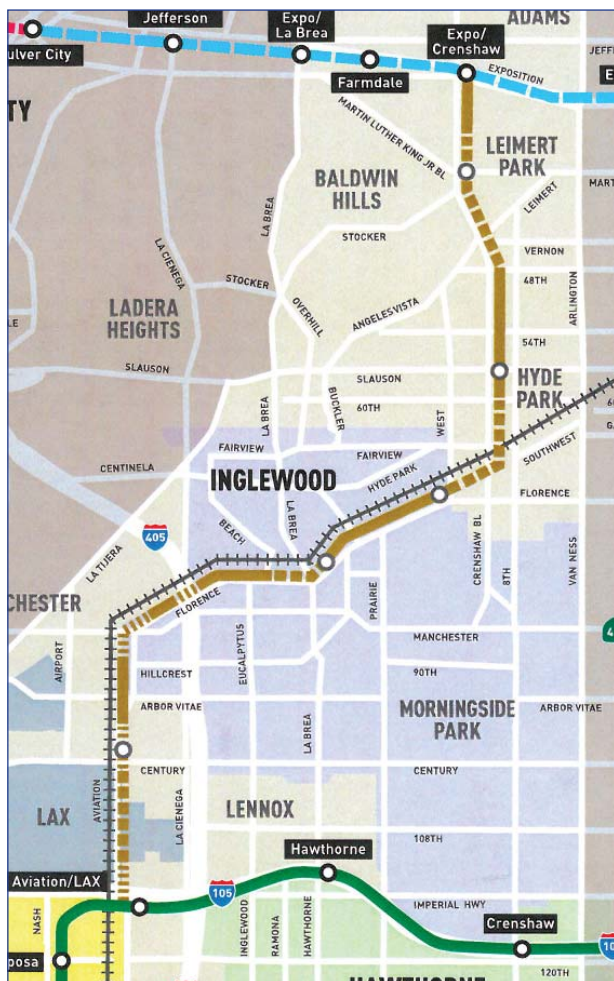
Mark Ridley-Thomas

Los Angeles County Second District

<http://Ridley-Thomas.LACounty.Gov>

CRENSHAW'S FUTURE IS ON THE LINE

FACT SHEET



The Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Transit Corridor will provide . . .

1. The first comprehensive north/south light rail transit option in western Los Angeles County
2. Connection with existing Green Line and Expo Line service
3. Connection with Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)
4. Economic development and job creation opportunities on the Crenshaw Corridor



Many major victories have been won in the past two years . . .

1. Schedule: Project completion was moved forward 13 years, from 2029 to 2016
2. Bus vs. Rail: The Metro Board approved light rail transit over bus
3. Budget: A project budget of \$1.7 billion was approved and funded with local and Federal money
4. Financing: A \$548 million Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), with \$35 million in interest paid by the Federal government, was provided with the help of Senator Barbara Boxer and the Obama Administration
5. Grade Separation: Over 55% of the 8.5 mile alignment is "grade separated," with 36% (3.1 miles) in a below-grade tunnel and 19% (1.6 miles) above-grade, mostly over the I-405 freeway
6. Grade Separation: The track profile through Hyde Park from Slauson to West Boulevards has been changed from above-grade to below-grade
7. Environmental Approvals: All environmental approval documents are complete
8. Connections: A "People Mover" system connecting the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor with airport terminals at LAX is being designed
9. Final Approval: The project is set for final approval in July 2011 and construction start in 2012

However, two significant issues remain, not yet included in the project scope . . .

1. Leimert Park Station: A station at Vernon Avenue to serve Leimert Park Village and View Park
2. Park Mesa Heights Tunnels: Undergrounding the train from 48th to 60th Streets, through Park Mesa Heights



Supervisor

Mark Ridley-Thomas

Los Angeles County • Second District

<http://Ridley-Thomas.LACounty.Gov>

1. A station at Vernon Avenue will . . .

- Serve Leimert Park and Leimert Park Village, one of the most widely-known and important commercial centers in the entire Crenshaw Corridor
- Promote economic development, job creation and business prosperity in the heart of the Crenshaw District

Without a Vernon Station, there will be no stops on the light rail line between Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Slauson Avenue, and no station to serve Leimert Park Village.

We need a station to serve Leimert Park Village!



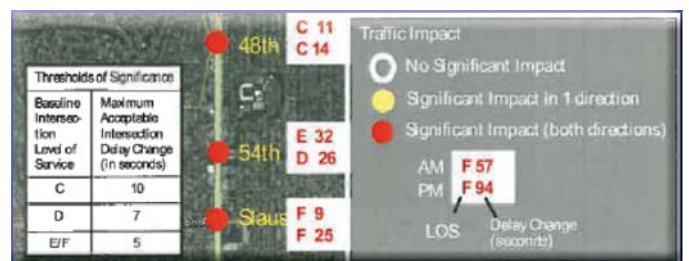
2. A tunnel through Park Mesa Heights will . . .

- Improve travel time for all passengers to LAX airport, by an average of two minutes per trip
- Increase ridership on the line by 700 passengers per day, a 4% increase
- Reduce potential safety concerns at schools and other sensitive uses
- Minimize disruption to local businesses
- Prevent gridlock on surface streets

If the line is not placed underground between 48th and 60th, Metro anticipates “significant traffic impacts” at three intersections: 48th Street, 54th Street and Slauson Avenue.

Metro promises to “mitigate” these impacts by . . .

- Eliminating business patron automobile parking on both sides of Crenshaw Boulevard
- Reducing left turn movements that are essential to vehicular traffic flow and access to businesses
- Removing trees and landscaping from Crenshaw Boulevard
- Dismissing potential safety concerns at schools and other sensitive uses



Even with these mitigations, the Crenshaw/Slauson intersection will be permanently congested at traffic Level of Service “F.”

This is not acceptable!

The State of California Public Utilities Commission wrote to Metro in 2009 that “due to the large amount of student pedestrian activity around schools, particularly with both Middle and High Schools adjacent to the proposed light rail transit at this location, we recommend Metro grade separate the intersections of 57th Street and Slauson Avenue.”



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

666 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012 / (213) 974-2222

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT

April 27, 2011

Mr. Arthur T. Leahy
Chief Executive Officer
Metro
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor

Dear Mr. Leahy:

This letter explains why my motion is necessary and how we achieve its goal. The significance of the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor is that it connects to the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) through a culturally rich community which benefits all of Los Angeles County. Crenshaw is the cultural heart of African-American Los Angeles. LAX is our gateway to the world.

As final approvals of the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor approach us, two important questions remain:

- Will there be a station at Leimert Park Village?
- Can Metro place the tracks safely underground in a tunnel through Park Mesa Heights?

Historical Significance of the Crenshaw Corridor

A transit corridor through the historic Crenshaw community has been an active vision among community leaders for almost three decades. Mayor Tom Bradley, Congressional Representatives Julian Dixon, Henry Waxman and Diane Watson, as well as others, have advocated for this line.

Two years ago, the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor was still a distant dream, perhaps a dedicated bus line with completion as late as year 2029.

Together, the members of the Metro Board of Directors and Metro staff have resurrected the project and imbued it with new vitality. Today, we are on the verge of approving a first-class light rail system that will connect with the existing Metro network at both the Expo and Green Lines, and provide a convenient access point for connection into the airport. Station area planning is underway at a half dozen sites along the alignment. Critically sensitive portions of the project,

near Exposition Boulevard, north of Park Mesa Heights, and through Hyde Park, immediately to the south, are slated for construction underground. For this considerable progress we, and the constituents we represent, are deeply grateful.

At the same time, Metro staff has been working diligently to keep the project within its approved Measure R and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) budget. We continue to work closely with your staff to ensure that both budget and schedule are maintained as planned.

The Crenshaw Community Expects Accountability and Responsible Transportation Planning

Nonetheless, we hear and have heard since the inception of this project, strong community—and transportation planning—reasons for including a Leimert Park Village Station at Vernon and a tunnel through Park Mesa Heights.

Board certification of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Environmental Impact Report for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor is scheduled for July 2011. Therefore, it is critical that the two remaining decisions be addressed now.

As you know, we have only one opportunity to construct this line properly - to “do it right.” Future generations will hold us accountable for the decisions we make today.

The significance of these decisions will be apparent, not just to commuters on the Crenshaw/LAX Line, but to everyone who enters our community through its preeminent portal at LAX. Representative John Mica (R-FL, Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure) and many others have noted that the LAX connection is a significant “missing link” in our transit network. The quality of this connection will leave first and lasting impressions on the numerous visitors, including congressional leaders, for which it may be their first “taste of LA.”

The quality of this line will also provide a discernable measure of appreciation to a community that has waited patiently for rail transit service and has consistently supported Measure R and other region-wide transit financing initiatives.

We recognize the extreme sensitivity that is attached to Metro funding decisions. Our office, after all, was a primary influence in crafting the unanimously accepted LRTP which carefully allocates Measure R and other Metro funds to a broad range of region-wide investments. The notion of “Regional Equity” is paramount in our minds and must be kept in constant consideration as decisions for Crenshaw/LAX and other projects are resolved.

In this spirit, we would like to address six issues that bear on the Leimert Park Village Station and Park Mesa Heights tunnel discussions. Several of these issues were addressed in detail in Metro's own "Park Mesa Heights Grade Separation Analysis," prepared in June 2010. Each of these considerations, we believe, mitigates strongly in favor of a Leimert Park Village Station and a tunnel through Park Mesa Heights.

1. **Leimert Park Village: A Destination Point**

Leimert Park is the undisputed cultural and commercial center of the Crenshaw Corridor. It is the location of the Corridor's preeminent small business community and its regionally-noted cultural and entertainment venues. It is also home to many prominent institutions, such as the Urban League and Tavis Smiley Studios, as well as a broadly-appreciated public park and the New Vision Theater. As such, Leimert Park Village is probably *the* most appropriate place to have a station on the entire Crenshaw Corridor. Omitting a station at this location would be like building the Red Line without a stop in Hollywood, the Purple Line without Century City, or the Gold Line without Mariachi Plaza.

The outpouring of letters and public comments in Metro meetings strongly reinforces the widely-held perception that Leimert Park Village is a primary transit destination on the Crenshaw Corridor and must have a dedicated transit access portal.

2. **Commuting: Tunneling Saves Travel Time**

Metro's Grade Separation Analysis documents the impact of a Park Mesa Heights tunnel and notes that an underground profile will reduce travel time on the Corridor from 18 minutes, without a tunnel, to 16.9 minutes with a tunnel and station at Crenshaw/Slauson, or 15.9 minutes without the Slauson station (pg. 43). The latter represents a 2.1 minute travel time improvement per trip, effectively a 12% reduction in commuting time for regular transit patrons, and for those entering our community from LAX.

Mode choice among potential transit users is largely influenced by speed of travel. These travel time improvements should significantly enhance utilization of the Metro system, with attendant collateral benefits in safety, air quality improvement, congestion relief and local economic growth.

3. **Ridership: Tunneling Boosts Usage**

The Metro study further notes that a tunnel through Park Mesa Heights will increase ridership by about 700 transit patrons per day in year 2035, from 20,210 to 20,970 if a Slauson station is included (pg. 44). This represents a 4% increase in ridership and fare revenue.

The Leimert Park Village Station will also increase ridership, although this increase is not acknowledged in the June 2010 study.

4. Safety: Tunneling Saves Lives

A primary reason for providing a tunnel through Park Mesa Heights is to promote public safety.

Astonishingly, Metro's Grade Separation Analysis concludes that "the determination of safety impact for both options (at-grade and below-grade) is the same" (pg. 49).

This illogical assertion cannot go unchallenged. No rational analysis can possibly conclude that there is no safety difference between at-grade and grade-separated rail lines. It does not flatter anyone associated with Metro to proffer such double-speak, especially to this neighborhood with its unique streetscape.

Metro has been down this path before. The "ghost" of Dorsey High School, with lingering public dissatisfaction over at-grade rail crossings, expensive and after-the-fact remediation measures, and long and expensive delays through the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and other legal appeal processes, portends a similar fate for Park Mesa Heights. The proximity of Crenshaw High School, Park View Preparatory School and several senior housing projects, as well as an active retail environment with far more foot traffic than exists at Dorsey or Foshay Learning Center, all suggest that Metro might want to take a more respectful approach towards grade separation at this site.

This is an issue that simply will not rest in the local community. Given our experiences with the Blue Line and recently with the Expo Line, only a decision to grade separate would represent the "highest and best" rail line.

5. Economic Development: Positive Impact on Local Business

Metro's Grade Separation Analysis includes no consideration of potential disruptions to local businesses. As you know, there is a unique community of generally small and locally-owned businesses that thrives on the Crenshaw Corridor today. These businesses will suffer serious disruptions to patron access patterns during construction and, even worse, may face crippling disadvantages when the project is complete.

Automobile traffic patterns on Crenshaw Boulevard will be disrupted by vaguely referenced mitigations, such as permanent closure of cross streets, elimination of automobile turning movements and reductions in the number of on-street business patron parking stalls. Local businesses are already extremely concerned.

In addition to its impacts on existing businesses, an at-grade alignment will thwart one of Metro's most important long-term goals: economic development in transit-served communities.

The Metro Grade Separation Analysis gives short shrift to this issue, concluding that "the intensity of development planned for this section of the Corridor is of low to medium density in scale" (pg. 38). This dismissive remark is not just a casual rebuke to our community's aspirations -- it is a consignment of our community to permanent economic disparity, a subtle but effective form of lasting financial subjugation. "Streetcar suburbs" do not become commercial centers. Installing a light rail line at grade will limit future growth potential and very likely form a debilitating constraint on a community that seriously wants to grow. This is the same bias that we detected in our review of the Federal New Starts evaluation process last year.

An at-grade profile may be adequate for a community that wants to retain its current low-density character. Only a subway, however, will allow a community to achieve substantial new economic growth.

6. Traffic: Congestion Reduced

The Metro study of Park Mesa Heights, as is typical of Metro grade separation analyses, focuses inordinately on the issue of automobile traffic flow.

Ironically, it is in this realm that some of the strongest arguments for grade separation occur.

Metro notes early in the study (pg. 10) that an at-grade alignment would cause "potential traffic impacts" at three out of seven major intersections in Park Mesa Heights. In each case, the level of service drops to D or F, and the Metro analysis shows a "significant impact" in the environmental review.

Metro blithely wishes this problem away by proposing to "eliminate outer parking lanes" (pg. 11) and restrict turning motions for automobiles traversing Park Mesa Heights. The ramification of these interventions on local commerce is not discussed, nor is the effect that they are likely to have on surrounding neighborhoods by diverting traffic onto local residential streets addressed. Most astonishing of all, the Metro report does not describe what the Level of Service (LOS) might be after these "mitigation measures" are installed. The report simply says that there will be "no significant impact on traffic."

On a rating scale from A to F with F being the worst, what the Metro report conceals is that the LOS at Crenshaw and 54th Street will drop to D with an at-grade alignment and the LOS at Slauson will remain at F. This is hardly "mitigation." Nor does it amount to "no significant impact." Quite the contrary, it smacks of deception and concealment of a material fact. Leaving this neighborhood with a D and an F for local traffic is not only unacceptable, it is unconscionable.

In summary, elimination of business patron parking, added to the elimination of cross streets and the elimination of turning movements, together with the installation of a light rail line in the middle of the Boulevard, will result in a traffic Level of Service permanently rated F at the most important intersection in Park Mesa Heights. This is an inadequate plan to put forth, far beneath the quality of work that we expect from your staff. To label it as "no significant impact" is egregious and disturbing at best.

Each of the technical considerations noted above, drawing heavily on analyses prepared by the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor team at Metro, militate strongly in favor of a station at Leimert Park Village and a tunnel profile through Park Mesa Heights.

Equitable Funding Preserves Options

As with every Metro project decision, good planning requires an equally good financing plan. The financing ideas do not "*rob Peter to pay Paul*." This is to say, they do not come at the expense of other existing projects.

We appreciate that your staff has developed a solid financing plan for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Base Project, with an estimated cost of \$1.715 billion. This plan relies almost exclusively on locally-generated funds, including Measure R, Prop A and Prop C. This self-reliant budget sufficiently impressed our Federal government colleagues that they offered an unprecedented (before and since) Transit Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan to advance funds for this project. The current financing plan for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor is rational and secure.

We further appreciate that your project team is working effectively to "value engineer" the Base Project into conformance with the project budget, even as inflationary fluctuations are beginning to appear in the construction world.

Our office is cooperating with their review of alignment reconfigurations, reduced right-of-way requirements, aerial structure changes, station location decisions, ventilation and open air station configurations and other technical modifications that will help keep this project on budget. Paramount among these is our ongoing discussion with the Federal Aviation Administration about the "trench" profile where the light rail line passes runways 25 L and 25 R at LAX.

Also significant to these discussions are calculations of appropriate cost-sharing formulas for the Southwestern Maintenance Yard, which will also serve two legs of the Green Line, and for portions of the Measure R Green Line to LAX project, which will be constructed as part of Crenshaw/LAX.

Please be assured that we will continue to cooperate with your office to make the value engineering adjustments that are necessary to keep the project "on track."

The two project features requested in this letter, a Leimert Park Village Station and a Park Mesa Heights tunne, are expected to require additional expenditures in the range of \$120 million and \$219 million, respectively, both in current, 2010 dollars.

Obviously, additional funds will need to be identified for these purposes. My motion merely directs Metro staff to identify funding options. In fact, Measure R expressly states that "Metro may expend additional funds from other sources other than the Sales Tax imposed pursuant to the Ordinance . . ." (pg. 9).

By way of illustration, we suggest consideration of the following possible sources of funds. At the same time, we recognize that project funding is a fluid process. We have continuing confidence that your staff will find an appropriate mix of sources to match these compelling needs.

1. Surplus Property Sales

Metro typically acquires properties during light rail installation that are used for temporary construction purposes. These properties can be declared surplus at the end of construction work. Typically, sale or leasing proceeds from surplus properties have reverted to Metro's General Fund. In the case of Crenshaw/LAX, and perhaps for other projects as well, we urge Metro to consider using these funds to defray the costs of the line itself. Perhaps as much as \$10 or \$15 million for Crenshaw/LAX can be generated from this source.

2. Arbor Vitae Ramps

Included in the LRTP is a long-standing allocation for construction of new ramps on the I-405 freeway at Arbor Vitae Street. There are existing ramps at Manchester and Century, and there is relatively little public demand for additional ramps in the vicinity. Because the Crenshaw/LAX line is located only a half mile west of the freeway, runs parallel to it, and is intended to relieve traffic on the I-405, we suggest that the \$31 million in this line item be reallocated to Crenshaw/LAX.

3. Green Line to LAX

Also in Measure R and the LRTP is a \$200 million line item for a project called "Green Line to LAX." This money was never intended to fully fund the project, but represents a partial contribution to the costs of connecting the existing Green Line directly into the Central Terminal Area of the airport. In fact, the Crenshaw/LAX Line will be constructing the first, southern-most mile of the Green Line to LAX, from the existing Green Line station at Imperial/Aviation to Century Boulevard, at a cost (Year of Expenditure) of \$172.6 million. The Crenshaw/LAX project will also acquire land and construct a station at Aviation/Century for \$89 million. This station will be shared with the Green Line to LAX. All of the costs of the Green Line extension and approximately one half of the costs of the Century/Aviation Station should be charged to the Green Line to LAX project.

In addition, as noted above, the Crenshaw/LAX project will construct a \$285 million Maintenance Yard which will also be shared with the Green Line to LAX.

It is, therefore, fully appropriate that the Green Line to LAX project pay its fair share of these common costs.

4. Other Highway Funds

Our conversations with Metro staff indicate that it may be possible to identify other funds, such as highway-related funds, that could be suitable for reallocation to Crenshaw/LAX. This is particularly appropriate if these funds were directed to local roads that will be relieved by the installation of light rail.

5. Expo Line Surplus Funds

Measure R and the LRTP contain a "third decade" allocation of \$111.3 million for an "unspecified project" related to the Expo Line. The current LRTP budget contains full appropriations for Expo Phase I and Expo Phase II, including money for all direct and indirect costs and a contingency. The "unspecified project" in Measure R and the LRTP must, therefore, represent funds that are either an additional contingency for Expo cost overruns or a surplus that will be available for other projects, including Crenshaw/LAX.

Because Crenshaw/LAX will serve the Central Sector (Expo serves both the Central and Western Sectors of Metro), and because the need exists today for augmentation of the Crenshaw/LAX budget, it is appropriate to consider reallocation of a portion of these Expo surplus to Crenshaw/LAX.

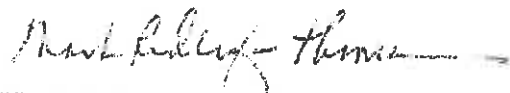
We face historic decisions at the Metro Board.

As we all know, the decisions we make today will have lasting ramifications. These ramifications will affect transit utilization and all of the collateral benefits that mode shift can provide. Beyond that, they will serve our communities in many less tangible ways, including the inspiration of economic development, hope and prosperity, and the restoration of optimism to the California economy, and to the businesses and households that we serve.

The decisions that face us today are not just about transit-funding. They reflect a "compact" with our constituents who have voted repeatedly to tax themselves for transit improvements, and have waited long for the results of that vote. It is essential that Metro serve all members of its wide-ranging communities, from the farthest reaches of the County to the historic heart of our urban realm. Budget decisions are inevitably difficult; that is the assignment we are tasked to solve.

It is not by what we build, or by how fast or even how safely we operate it, it is by the meaning of our work for the people that we serve, that we must ultimately be judged.

With hope,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mark Ridley-Thomas", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Supervisor, Second District

Template for Community Letters to Metro Board emailed to Michele Jackson for distribution or fax to 213-922-4594.

VIA EMAIL TO jacksonm@metro.net

[Insert name of Metro Board Member]

Metro Board

One Gateway Plaza, 3rd Floor

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Vote Yes on May 26, 2011 to Add a Leimert Park Station and Underground the Train Through Park Mesa Heights on the Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Line

Dear _____:

I am (affiliation, i.e., "President of the XXX," "resident of the XXX neighborhood," "owner of xxx business on Crenshaw Blvd., etc.").

(If writing to the Mayor, and this is the case) I was proud to support your election as Mayor of Los Angeles and also backed Measure R.

I have **(lived/owned a business/been active)** in the Crenshaw community for ____ years. I have been eager to see a Crenshaw rail line since it was first proposed by Congressman Julian Dixon and Mayor Tom Bradley in the 1980's. I am pleased to support the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line as another positive public works project for our region but I strongly believe that our community can not afford to pay an unfair price for progress.

I am writing to urge that you vote yes to add a Leimert Park station and run the train below ground through the Park Mesa Heights neighborhood on the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line for the following reasons: (1) to provide equitable public transportation service with a Leimert Park station; (2) to provide the safest service with a tunnel underground through Park Mesa Heights; (3) to maximize job creation and economic development potential in the Crenshaw corridor; (4) to address local community concerns; and (5) to prevent traffic congestion on Crenshaw Boulevard and in residential neighborhoods.

Our community has been a key force in the progressive politics that have been the foundation for the diverse, prosperous and innovative city we have become. The entire region has benefited from the Harbor, Santa Monica and Century freeways that run through our communities. For those benefits, however, we have also paid a price in our neighborhoods through greater air and noise pollution and diminished property values.

Please do not ignore our need for fair transportation services. It is our hope, however, that you will use your authority as a Metro Director to recognize the value of a long-term investment in the heart and soul of Los Angeles. The cost of not doing so will be far greater to all.

Sincerely,

Metro Board Members

Don Knabe

Chair

Los Angeles County Supervisor

Fourth Supervisorial District

JMoore@bos.lacounty.gov

Antonio R. Villaraigosa

First Vice Chair, LACMTA

Mayor, City of Los Angeles

jaime.delavega@lacity.org

Michael D. Antonovich

Second Vice Chair

Los Angeles County Supervisor

Fifth Supervisorial District

MCano@bos.lacounty.gov

Diane DuBois

City Council Member, Lakewood

kheit@gatewaycog.org

John Fasana

City Council Member, Duarte

ECHTERNACHM@metro.net

José Huizar

City Council Member, Los Angeles

(Appointed by Villaraigosa)

Richard Katz

City of Los Angeles

Appointed by the Mayor of Los Angeles

(Appointed by Villaraigosa)

Mel Wilson

City of Los Angeles

Appointed by the Mayor of Los Angeles

(Appointed by Villaraigosa)

Gloria Molina

Los Angeles County Supervisor

First Supervisorial District

NEnglund@bos.lacounty.gov

Ara Najarian

Mayor, City of Glendale

MichelineM@metro.net

Pam O'Connor

City Council Member, Santa Monica

Pam.Oconnor@smgov.net

BOHLKEM@metro.net

Mark Ridley-Thomas

Los Angeles County Supervisor

Second Supervisorial District

FRamirez@bos.lacounty.gov

Zev Yaroslavsky

Los Angeles County Supervisor

Third Supervisorial District

VRescalvo@bos.lacounty.gov



Supervisor
Mark Ridley-Thomas
Los Angeles County • Second District
<http://Ridley-Thomas.LACounty.gov>

Voices for Crenshaw

Comments from websites on the Crenshaw/LAX line

Los Angeles Times

pacsnav at 12:55 AM May 4, 2011

"With so many cultural events that happen at Leimert Park, along with the uniqueness of the community, this is a no brainer for Metro."

Studiorack at 11:28 AM May 6, 2011

"Everyone knows it makes absolutely no sense to build a light rail system in LA and not have it go into LAX. So instead, I have to take a train to Union station and ride a bus from there to LAX.

LAX to Union station should have been done from the beginning."

Leimert Park Activist at 10:08 PM May 5, 2011

"An excellent argument that for the first time introduces the historical perspective of transportation decisions. Many may want to have a debate about this issue by ignoring the past, but for those of us in South LA, East LA and other less powerful communities that have lived through it, it is just not possible.

Get it right, for once, MTA. Think of your legacy Mr. Mayor."

LA of Anaheim at 12:41 PM May 6, 2011

"A mayor that gave us Measure R that will have a much larger transit network in 20 years. Yes! Antonio has done more for LA transit than any other previous mayor! We do appreciate his dedication to Los Angeles!"

LA.STREETSBLOG.Org

Damien Newton on April 29, 2011

"If I could gamble on Metro Board votes, I would bet the Mark Ridley-Thomas motion on Leimert Station/Grade Separation passes next month. There might be some amendments to soften some of the language, but the bulk of the resolution will remain as is. This isn't a statement on the value of the station, but a look at the politics. The support of Supervisor Mike Antonovich shows that the Republicans (3 votes) on the Metro Board are open to the concept. One of the reasons that they didn't hold the vote yesterday was because there were three absent voters that could make the difference in the tally, including the Mayor. If he were planning on voting no, he would have pushed for the vote to be yesterday so he didn't upset his constituents in South L.A., so I'm assuming a "yes" vote for him and his block of votes (4 in total). Add in the obvious "yes" vote of Ridley-Thomas and that is an 8-7 vote in favor of the motion even if everyone else is opposed."

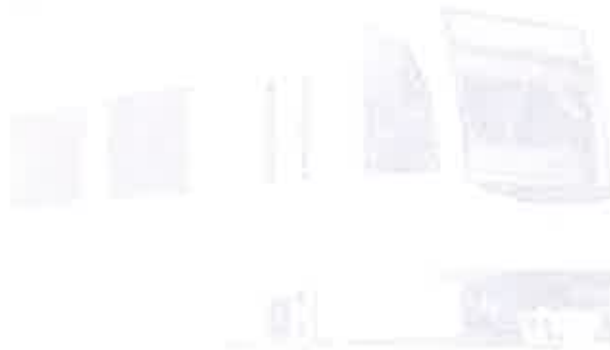
Little Logic on May 6, 2011

"The Ridley-Thomas motion doesn't specify where the money comes from it simply identifies potential sources. If there are other sources (and there are) Metro staff should propose them. Metro moves money around for these projects almost on an annual basis.

Among the potential sources of money is the I-405 on/off-ramps for Arbor Vitae that no one wants. I thought spending highway money on transit was considered a good thing on this board.

Another is the Green Line to LAX project, whereby the \$200M price tag for the tunnel by the LAX runways is coming out of the Crenshaw-LAX budget. At the least the Green Line to LAX project should share the cost.

Another is not Expo Phase 2, but this mysterious undefined "Expo Phase 2 substitute project." Expo Phase 2 is already fully funded, which includes a contingency. So what is the "substitute project"? Ask the politicians and the Metro staff and you get no answers."





Press Clippings



Los Angeles Times



Andrew Johnson and friend Prince Idris, 2, play drums together in the Village at Leimert Park. Watching in the background is Prince's mother, Nikkanni McLennan. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times / April 28, 2011)

Leimert Park deserves a light-rail station

The MTA is bringing light rail to the Crenshaw corridor, but not to Leimert Park, the vibrant neighborhood a longtime resident and transportation activist calls 'our Little Africa.'

Hector Tobar

May 6, 2011

When I was a kid, I had a map with a dotted line for the Beverly Hills Freeway. It was going to run just south of my East Hollywood neighborhood, plowing through the Fairfax district on its way to the sea, bulldozing a mansion or two along the way.

It was never built, of course.

Another dotted line on that same map marked the Century Freeway, Interstate 105, which was built. Caltrans cut a gaping no-man's land through South L.A. and Lynwood years before construction began, and so fostered crime and urban decay.

Working-class L.A. bore the brunt of the sacrifice in the building of L.A.'s massive transportation network. Communities of color were especially hard-hit.

Now the Metropolitan Transportation Authority is undertaking a big public works project that can help atone for the sins of the past. Light rail is coming to the Crenshaw corridor. Everyone agrees it will be a boon.

But Metro's board has no plans for a Leimert Park station, though a vote on the issue is scheduled for May 26.

Metro's trains now bring tourists to Olvera Street and Little Tokyo. They should do the same for Leimert Park, said James Fugate, co-owner of Eso Won bookstore, which is located in the heart of the community, near a town square that's becoming a focal point of African American culture in L.A.

"It really does make sense to build it here," Fugate said. "We need a station. This is an up-and-coming area. And it's a good tourist destination — except that it's hard for tourists to get here."

So far, plans call for a train stop half a mile away at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza on Martin Luther King Boulevard, and another more than a mile away on Slauson Avenue.

As for the site of an annual Juneteenth festival, an art walk, a Kwanzaa gathering, a book festival and many other events, it would be bypassed.

People in the community have every reason to be upset.

"Leimert Park is our Little Africa," said Damien Goodmon, a Leimert Park native and transportation activist. "The prospect of running light rail through here and not stopping in Leimert Park is unacceptable. You wouldn't run a line through East L.A. without stopping at Mariachi Plaza. Or go through Chinatown without stopping there."

Considering all the poor policy decisions inflicted on black L.A. over the years, you'd think today's leaders would be falling all over themselves to get it right this time.

We're told that money is scarce, that the area doesn't have enough economic activity to justify the investment — some \$148 million for the Leimert Park station alone. We've been hearing such arguments about South L.A. for decades.

L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas says he's been pushing for a Leimert Park station as well as a tunnel underneath a one-mile section of Crenshaw just south of Leimert Park known as Park Mesa Heights. Ridley-Thomas and others want the tunnel

(price tag: more than \$200 million) for the same reason they want the station: because it's what best for their community.

Current MTA plans envision the line running at street level in Park Mesa Heights, with parking spaces and pine trees removed to make way for the tracks.

MTA studies show that with Metro trains running above ground, automobile traffic at the intersection of Slauson and Crenshaw would degrade to an unacceptably congested "F" status, the supervisor told me. This would probably lead city officials to restrict new building permits in the area. We'd be saving money now but stealing it from the community's future.

Scarce parking, bad traffic and years of construction are the kind of perfect storm that can overwhelm a small business like the one belonging to Mofizur Rahaman, the owner of Taj Mahal Imports, a storefront selling incense and oils in fragrances such as frankincense and Egyptian musk.

"No, no, no," Rahaman told me when I described the plans. "Underground is fine. No one is bothered."

A few doors down at the Black Diamond gym, Darvell Powell, 30, paused from his workout to talk about the lessons of the Blue Line, which runs above ground as it passes through South L.A. He said he was inside a Blue Line train once when "three Latino boys ran across the tracks and the last boy didn't make it."

"We've got kids here," he said, referring to nearby Crenshaw High. "If you're going to build it, get it off the street."

Wandering back to Leimert Park, I got a hint of the potential a new station there could unleash.

Eso Won Books was getting ready for an appearance by Spike Lee, who was promoting his latest documentary. And copies of Manning Marable's new Malcolm X biography were flying off the shelves.

One customer talked to Fugate about the day in 1965 when the militant activist died.

"I remember when I heard," the patron said. "It was a Sunday. I was coming out of St. Paul's Church at 12th Avenue and Washington..."

Leaving the bookstore, I came upon an art gallery that recently closed. Plywood covered the entrance of the nearby Vision Theater, a 1930s gem whose ongoing renovation is a source of hope for local residents. I was reminded of what Mariachi Plaza in Boyle Heights looked like before the Gold Line arrived — alive, yes, but badly in need of a boost.

Now we're asking South L.A. to sacrifice — again — so that we save money for other projects, including the Subway to the Sea. Given L.A.'s history, it doesn't seem right to me.



[Our Weekly](#) > [features](#) > transportation-and-representation-it's-time-put-or-shut

Transportation and representation: it's time to put up or shut up

May 05, 2011

[David L. Horne, Ph.D.](#) | OW Contributing Columnist

Practical Politics

In a classic case of conflict anxiety, Black Angelenos—city and unincorporated folk—will get (or have gotten) the complicated opportunities this week (and before the end of May) to strongly influence political decisions to be made on their future.

The decisions will be made—that's a certainty. The issue is whether Black community folk will show up in numbers for their own interests and advocate for decisions that are for their mutual best benefit, or will they be content to stay on the sidelines and complain as they are disrespected and mistreated in the aftermath of those decisions.

Black folk need to get on up and get on out to the meetings at which those decisions will be made.

The votes of the MTA authority, and the Redistricting Commission, will not just be by the book. They will be subjective; they will be cultural; they will be class-based. They will come from both hard data and the will of a loud-voiced community.

One of the MTA meetings was scheduled at 9 a.m. at the One Gateway Plaza address of the Metro Authority, behind the Alameda-Union Train Station in downtown Los Angeles, last Thursday, April 28, but has now been re-scheduled for May 26, same place and time.

The local Redistricting Commission meetings were held as scheduled—in Los Angeles City Hall last Thursday and in Lancaster Sunday. The only Southern California meetings left are in Norco today (May 5) and Santa Ana tomorrow.

The commission is currently on a statewide tour to provide as many residents as possible the opportunity to render testimony about their communities. The commission will use that accumulated information, along with new U.S. census data now available, to draw new congressional as well as state Assembly, Senate and Board of Equalization districts.

The commission was created in 2008, because voters decided to take the power to draw state political districts away from the state legislature and give it to this new 14-person Redistricting Commission comprised of five Democrats, five Republicans and four members who can and have declined to state their political party affiliations. In 2010, voters also added U.S. congressional districts to the commission's authority.

In theory, political considerations are barred from the commission's work, except to ensure that no incumbent, candidate or political party is favored or discriminated against in the maps to be drawn, and to ensure that electoral districts are of equal population, that those districts comply with the Voting Rights Act, and that those districts are contiguous and respect communities with common interests.

The commission is scheduled to release its first set of new draft maps to the public on June 10.

The law requires the panel to approve final redistricting maps for California by Aug. 15.

For the Metro issue, county Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas has made a powerful request that the Metro board reconsider its earlier rebuke of the wishes of the majority of homeowners and business folk in the Crenshaw district between Exposition Boulevard south through Florence Boulevard. The board can vote to include underground construction of the rail line in the area, and a preferred stop on Vernon and Crenshaw, so foot traffic will easily take tourists and business investors straight to Leimert Park Village, with its many retail shops and cultural cuisine items.

But the board will have to be convinced to do so. In order for that proposal to be successful, we all need some real booties in the balcony. Black folk need to be seen in the aisles, halls and in the seats to demonstrate our sustained interest in the supervisor's proposal. No people, no pressure, and no positive vote. That's how it works. So get there.

By the way, just so you know, based on a \$546 million federal loan already appropriated for this Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor project, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has the money to fund Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' proposal and to begin building the 8.5-mile light rail line from the Crenshaw District to near LAX in late 2012 or early 2013.

The project is expected to create at least 5,000 jobs, including some for Crenshaw- area residents.

This new light rail line will allow direct train service from downtown Los Angeles to an LAX transit center slated to begin operations by or before 2016. Trains will take passengers on the Exposition Line past USC to Crenshaw Boulevard, then head southwest down Crenshaw (hopefully underground) on new tracks through Leimert Park and Inglewood to link with existing Green Line tracks near the airport, where buses will take passengers the rest of the way.

The other issue is state redistricting. Many people are nonplussed in discussions regarding this issue. Here's the plain skinny: the Southland's Black population is in real danger of losing half or more of its four U.S. Congresswomen, its eight Legislative Black Caucus members, and its one Black seat on the State Board of Equalization. In other words, it is more than just possible that we will move two giant steps politically backwards in the next several months, if we sit idly and try to wait this out. We need chocolate on the boards to provide support for our two Black redistricting commissioners, Andre Parvenu and Connie Galambos-Malloy.

We must demonstrate our community-of-interest in each of the elective seats we currently occupy.

We cannot mail this in; we must continue to be at every relevant meeting, as we were last Thursday, possibly including the upcoming meeting in Oakland in May. This issue needs Black faces by the hundreds, even thousands. Assuming political people who are not us (and even when they are) will do the right thing for us is tantamount to acquiescing to our own degradation.

We needed to show up or be thrown out of any future political-economic development in the Southland, and we responded. The commission saw and felt our presence and now know we are constructively engaged in this process. All who did not make it or who did not get a chance to speak should write the Redistricting Commission and re-emphasize our "communities of interest" in maintaining the current boundaries of U.S. Congressional Districts 9, 33, 35 and 37, and State Assembly Districts 47, 62, 48, 52, 16, and State Senate Districts 25 and 26.

So, what are you going to do people? The onus is on you and me to put our political size 13's on the floor headed to the decision-making halls. Black booties in the chairs for Black political futures. What say you?

Professor David L. Horne is founder and executive director of PAPPEI, the Pan African Public Policy and Ethical Institute, which is a new 501(c)(3) pending community-based organization or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). It is the step-parent organization for the California Black Think Tank which still operates and which meets every fourth Friday.

Thursday, May 5, 2011 [18 Comments](#)

In Crenshaw, Overwhelming Enthusiasm for Leimert Park Station

by [Damien Newton](#) on May 5, 2011



For Residents of the Crenshaw Corridor the issue has nothing to do with Measure R Funds, they just want a station at Leimert Park. Photo: [Waltarr/Flickr](#)

A recent motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas calling for grade separation for nearly the entire Crenshaw Corridor and a second station at Leimert Park, has become one of the most controversial Metro proposals in recent memories. Transit advocates across the region worry about the impact on other Measure R projects, especially because the motion wants to look at moving funds for expansion of the Green Line or Expo Line to fund the additional projects. You can read more details about the proposal, [here](#).

But in news papers up and down the Crenshaw Corridor, there is unanimous support for the ideas of both grade separating the line and especially for the Leimert Park Station.

An [editorial in the L.A. Sentinel](#) asks the question, “why isn’t there a station planned for Leimert Park?” The park and businesses surrounding it is viewed by many as the cultural center of South Los Angeles, and seems to be a natural fit for a rail station, above or below ground. The editorial is full of supportive quotes from politicians and advocates, but this comment by the Michael Jones of the Crenshaw Chamber of Commerce captures the argument for both Leimert Station and a grade-separated Crenshaw Line:

There are two things involved here. One is Metro is saying they don’t want to do it because it cost too much money; so that’s a concern that they have.

However, when you look at Leimert coming up ... the Vision Theater, the renovated shops and the businesses that will follow, for that train NOT to stop at Vernon and Crenshaw, will be a travesty to the community. The other part is that the train must run underground between 48th Street and 59th Street. Why? Because the time it will take to build two train tracks in the middle of Crenshaw, the businesses will be affected in a very, very bad way.

Our Weekly has published Opinion pieces in each of its last two editions by a pair of Ph.D.’s promoting the Station and grade-separation. Last week, Dr. Anthony Asadullah Samad [makes the same point slightly more succinctly](#).

Urban centers are designed around two things: schools and mass transit. Business comes where the transit stops, and homeowners come where the schools are. The money then follows both.

Until our community understands that mis-designing mass transit is a detriment to the economic development prospects of our community, we will never see the change we desire.

When we get it, they get it.

[This week](#), David Horne calls for the Corridor’s black community to come out and support the Ridley-Thomas motion at this month’s meeting of the Metro Board of Directors. He notes that the early morning schedule for the meeting makes attendance difficult, but this may be the community’s only chance to get the station, and separation, they want.

But the board will have to be convinced to do so. In order for that proposal to be successful, we all need some real booties in the balcony. Black folk need to be seen in the aisles, halls and in the seats to demonstrate our sustained interest in the supervisor’s proposal. No people, no pressure, and no positive vote. That’s how it works. So get there.

Last, but never least, Damien Goodmon [writes in The Wave](#) that building the Leimert Station isn’t just good for the Crenshaw community, but the entire city:

The plight of the Crenshaw business community should concern us all. If Los Angeles is a salad bowl filled with a mixture of cultures from throughout the world, Crenshaw must be the dressing. Our region should no more welcome the destruction of the Crenshaw business community than it should Little Tokyo or Chinatown. Crenshaw is as much a part of our unique identity as a multicultural city, as any other ethnic center. We must both preserve it and enhance it with the Crenshaw-LAX Light Rail Line.

One thing that doesn't appear in any of these opinion pieces is a broader discussion of Metro finances or an analysis of whether the Crenshaw Line is more or less important than the Expo Line or Green Line. The issue isn't about the larger Measure R picture, its just about an effort to get the rail line that they feel makes the most sense for the community.

Metro urged to add a Leimert Park stop on the Crenshaw Line

The agency cites costs and other planned stops nearby.



Ralph Zeno enjoys breakfast on the outdoor patio at the California Float Cafe on Crenshaw Boulevard in Leimert Park. The area is not scheduled to get a stop on the new Crenshaw Line. (Mel Melcon, Los Angeles Times / May 4, 2011)

By Ari Bloomekatz, **Los Angeles Times**

May 4, 2011

Leimert Park Village has long been a soul of African American life and culture in South Los Angeles.

Jazz and blues regularly spill into the street, and shoppers browse the titles at one of the last remaining black-centric bookstores. Community activists meet in Leimert Park Village and residents sometimes hold memorial vigils there.

But to dismay of some in South L.A., a new light rail line set to run through the heart of L.A.'s black community does not include a stop at the historic district. Instead, planners want to build a station about half a mile north, at the Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills mall, which they believe is more of a draw.

Construction of the Crenshaw Line is expected to begin next year, but some community leaders and residents are making a last-ditch effort to secure a stop in Leimert Park. They argue it's the right thing for the community and would make Leimert Park Village even more of a cultural draw.

"Leimert is its own special place. You cannot have a station at [[Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard](#)] and a station at Slauson [Avenue] and not have one at Leimert," said attorney Nana Gyamfi, who lives in South L.A. and likes to hang out and shop in the village. "That doesn't even make sense to anyone that knows anything about the area."

But [Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) officials are dubious, saying the station would add about \$148 million to the \$1.7-billion project and serve only about 840 riders a day. The Crenshaw Line is already \$80 million over budget.

Roderick Diaz, the project director for the Crenshaw Line, said adding a stop would also violate a longtime Metro practice of not having stations less than a mile apart. (The rule has been broken before, as on the Expo Line near USC and on the Purple Line near Wilshire Center.)

The "cost increases create friction because it could cut into what others have available for their projects around the county," added David Yale, Metro's deputy executive officer for countywide regional planning and development. "We're stretched in two different directions, both on costs and on revenues.... This is a hard decision for the board to make."

The debate comes at what should be a upbeat moment for the denizens along Crenshaw Boulevard, who have been pushing for years for a piece of L.A.'s light rail system.

The 8.5-mile line would run from the Expo Line at Exposition Boulevard south along Crenshaw Boulevard through Inglewood, terminating at the Green Line near [Los Angeles International Airport](#).

When Leimert Park was developed in the late 1920s, it was restricted to whites and was known for its lush golf courses. But black musicians, writers and artists began moving into the area after the 1965 Watts riots.

Now Leimert Park Village is host to community festivals celebrating [Kwanzaa](#) and [Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#), and its cultural significance was bolstered earlier this year when the nonprofit Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center opened there.

Storeowners in Leimert Park Village have fallen on hard times in recent years, and foot-traffic has dwindled. A [Starbucks](#) at Crenshaw and Vernon boulevards closed, as did other shops.

Shop owners and some community planners said they hoped a transit stop at Leimert Park Village would help revitalize business.

"If you had a stop there, it becomes that much more attractive for a national retailer. It becomes that much more of a destination, not just for the African American community but for the city at large," said community development activist Tunua Thrash. "A transit stop there is positioning us for a future in Leimert Park."

L.A. County Supervisor [Mark Ridley-Thomas](#) has asked the Metro board to add the Leimert stop and spend \$269 million more to put the rail line underground for a roughly one-mile section at Park Mesa Heights.

The supervisor has proposed shifting funds away from other projects, including a portion of the \$200 million that is to be allocated for a possible extension of the Crenshaw and Green lines toward LAX.

"Leimert Park Village is probably the most appropriate place to have a station on the entire Crenshaw Corridor, Ridley-Thomas wrote in a letter to Art Leahy, Metro's chief executive. "Omitting a station at this location would be like building the Red Line without a stop in Hollywood ... or the Gold Line without Mariachi Plaza."

Officials hope to have the Crenshaw Line open by 2018. Metro predicts between 12,000 and 20,000 riders each weekday.

ari.bloomekatz@latimes.com

Los Angeles Times

Editorial

Keep MTA's Crenshaw/LAX project on track

Mark Ridley-Thomas' proposal for the Crenshaw/LAX transit corridor means well but is ill-conceived.



Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas proposes that the Crenshaw/LAX light-rail line make an additional stop at Leimert Park Village. (Spencer Weiner, Los Angeles Times / March 7, 2011)

April 28, 2011

Supervisor [Mark Ridley-Thomas](#) wants the [Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) to upgrade the planned Crenshaw/LAX transit corridor in South Los Angeles, moving more of the light-rail line underground and adding a station closer to Leimert Park Village. It's hard to make the financial case for the extra tunneling, but it makes sense to put a station closer to the heart of Leimert Park.

The Crenshaw/LAX project would run southwest from the Expo Line at Crenshaw Boulevard, meeting the Green Line near [Los Angeles International Airport](#). The current plan calls for just one segment along Crenshaw to be at street level: from 48th Street south to 59th Street. Ridley-Thomas and his allies argue that running trains down the middle of the street would pose a safety threat to area schools and would be an impediment to economic development along the route. They want to add an estimated \$219 million to the project to put the entire route along Crenshaw underground.

The same arguments are raised wherever a light-rail line is planned, and they don't hold water. There are far less expensive ways to protect pedestrians, and the MTA's record shows that it knows how to operate light-rail lines near schools safely. And although the line could make it harder for cars and pedestrians to cross that part of Crenshaw, it will also make businesses there more accessible to transit users in the rest of Los Angeles, helping them attract significantly more customers.

The potential boon to the local economy argues in favor of putting a station closer to Leimert Park Village, a historic center of African American life in Los Angeles. The MTA's plan calls for an underground station near the shopping mall and bus stops at Crenshaw and [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) Boulevard, less than half a mile from the center of Leimert Park. Ridley-Thomas wants to build a second underground stop at Vernon Avenue, a little more than half a mile down Crenshaw, for about \$120 million.

It's not common for the MTA to build stations that close together, but it's hardly unprecedented. A bigger hurdle is the project's cost. Agency engineers are struggling to bring down the cost of the current design to meet the project's \$1.7-billion budget, and they may have to pare or delay numerous projects if the state continues to have trouble issuing bonds to fund its share of the region's transportation projects.

Ridley-Thomas argues that there are plenty of dollars available through Measure R, the sales-tax increment devoted to transportation projects, for both upgrades he's seeking. But if the MTA heads down that path, it should tread carefully. Shifting dollars from other corridors to Crenshaw/LAX would violate the spirit of the ballot measure and the MTA's master plan.

The least expensive approach would be to move the planned station at King closer to Vernon. Ridley-Thomas makes an effective case for an additional station, but he should support it with a credible funding plan that doesn't advance his project at the expense of other communities' needs.

Los Angeles Sentinel

Leimert Park Station A Must

Written by Yussuf J. Simmonds (Managing Editor), on 04-28-2011 21:01

Anything less will devastate the businesses in the area and devalue the community

By Yussuf J. Simmonds
Sentinel Managing Editor

The metro rail is coming through "our" neighborhood, but there is one problem: according to the latest information the Sentinel has received, it is not scheduled to stop at Leimert Park, which is a major cultural and business center for African Americans and is punctuated by the Vision Theater. And the community wants to know--Why?

Second District Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who is also the Metro Director, has introduced a motion to add a station at Leimert Park and a tunnel through the area--Park Mesa Heights--from 48th to 60th Streets beneath Crenshaw Boulevard. The line is scheduled to run along the Crenshaw Transit Corridor CTC) from Exposition Boulevard southbound to the Hyde Park Boulevard area.

The full Metro Board is scheduled to vote on the matter on Thursday April 28. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's voting bloc (a total of 4 votes) could make the difference. They, along with Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Michael Antonovich who is also on board would only need one other vote to make the Leimert Park Station a reality.

There have been community forums and meetings held to iron out the discrepancies and inconsistencies that have dogged the CTC since the light rail was scheduled to begin the Crenshaw Boulevard portion of the line. And according to one of the community forum's flyers, when it's built right (including the Leimert Park Station), the community will reap economic opportunities and benefits.

In addition, according to the supervisor's office, the project is designed to produce a total of approximately 7800 jobs--4400 construction jobs and 3400 indirect jobs associated with the engineering, materials and design component of the project. Also when completed, the rail is expected to yield 272 permanent jobs, a figure based on the environmental report. The Sentinel was also told that out of the total light rail budget of \$1.7 billion, the Leimert Park station is estimated to cost \$120 million, less than ten percent of the budget.

Residents of the area, business people and elected officials, whose districts will be directly impacted, have all voiced their concerns and have come out strongly in support of the station and what the impact will be without the Leimert Park stop along the Crenshaw line.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas: "The vote cast on Thursday, April 28 will determine the fate of the Crenshaw Corridor for generations to come. Passage of the motion guarantees that Leimert Park is not bypassed as a station stop and that the safety of thousands of people who live, work and worship in the Crenshaw Corridor are put first by having the train below ground in the Park Mesa Heights community."

Assemblyman Mike Davis: "I believe this is a necessary proposal which creates the opportunity for South Los Angeles to receive its fair share of rail transportation services, given both the state and federal funds tied to the project," said Assemblyman Mike Davis. "We have always been concerned about the diversity of the workplace on transportation projects in our community. We believe that contracts should be shared with the small and medium sized firms in the manner consistent with the large corporate firms. We believe this is true diversity which improves the quality of life for the residents of the Crenshaw District."

Laura Hendricks, long time business owner of Gallery Plus located in the heart of the Leimert Park district said, "I think it's a good thing (the Leimert Park station) with the Vision Theater here and all the people who come to shop there is no reason for them not to stop here." She said that she is on board with the idea.

Joe Bowers, a resident of the area said, "I'm firmly behind having a station at Leimert Park because it's vitally essential to the economics and viability of the area."

Damien Goodmon, another resident of the area and chair of the Crenshaw Subway Coalition said, "There are other communities and ethnic centers on the Metro system. Little Tokyo has a station; Chinatown has a station. I don't see any reason why the ethnic center of the African American community wouldn't be on the Metro system." In response to other proposed stations along the Crenshaw Corridor that are in the African American community, he replied, "That's ridiculous! Throughout the Metro system, there are examples of station that are within a half a mile on every rail line they've built, and a half of a mile, as everyone knows, is way too far for most people to comfortably walk." In essence, Goodmon was referring the distance between the 'King Blvd.' station and the 'Slauson Blvd.' station. "Theoretically, but most people won't do it, and it'll be a lost opportunity for our community to provide that unique African American cultural, social, political, art experience that is the envy of the world."

And Michael S. Jones of the Crenshaw Chamber of Commerce said, "There are two things involved here. One is Metro is saying they don't want to do it because it cost too much money; so that's a concern that they have."

However, when you look at Leimert coming up ... the Vision Theater, the renovated shops and the businesses that will follow, for that train NOT to stop at Vernon and Crenshaw, will be a travesty to the community. The other part is that the train must run underground between 48th Street and 59th Street. Why? Because the time it will take to build two train tracks in the middle of Crenshaw, the businesses will be affected in a very, very bad way." Going underground will be less disruptive to the community.

The voting on Thursday at the full Metro Board meeting will let the community know the outcome.



LOS ANGELES SENTINEL

VOL. LXXVII, NO. 17 • 75 Cents • Ca. Sales Tax

"For Seventy-Five Years The Voice of Our Community Speaking for Itself"

THURSDAY, APRIL 28 - MAY 4, 2011

EDITORIAL

Thank You Mr. Mayor!

Thank you for standing with residents of the Crenshaw Corridor. With your support, transportation projects of vital importance to the South Los Angeles community and commuters throughout the County are close to becoming a reality. They are: the placing of a train station in Leimert Park Village as part of the Crenshaw-to-LAX line, and the undergrounding of the train through Park Mesa Heights.

It is inconceivable to our community that the Crenshaw-to-airport line could actually bypass the heart of the Crenshaw community and omit a stop in Leimert Park. As for the line through Park Mesa Heights, the community has consistently opposed having the rail run down the middle of Crenshaw Boulevard instead of underground.

So this page, which takes note of allies, thanks Michael D. Antonovich.

That's right, Mayor Antonovich. The fifth district county supervisor is currently

serving a term as the "mayor" of Los Angeles County, a title that comes with his chairmanship of the Board of Supervisors.

Mayor Antonovich is also a member of the Metro Board and has stood with Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas in the struggle to make these crucial features of the Crenshaw Corridor a reality. Antonovich, whose district is bordered by the Kern, San Bernardino and Ventura County lines, provided the necessary second to Ridley-Thomas' motion and voted to include a station at Leimert Park Village at Vernon and underground the light rail line from 48th to 60th near Park Mesa Heights at a recent Metro committee meeting.

The full Metro Board votes today on the matter, and its decision could shape economic development, traffic patterns and safety issues in the Crenshaw Corridor for generations to come.

We hope we will have the opportunity to use this page to publicly thank the Mayor of the

City of Los Angeles, Antonio Villaraigosa, after this morning's Metro Board meeting. After all, the residents of Leimert Park and Park Mesa Heights actually are his constituents and are counting on his support today.

The mayor's vote—Villaraigosa's, we mean—along with that of his three appointees, is critical to the success of efforts to build the \$1.7 billion Crenshaw-LAX line the right way. Supervisor Ridley-Thomas has championed this cause, but the fact is he can't win—we can't win—without Villaraigosa's backing.

So Crenshaw corridor voters will be watching what happens closely. We are ready, hoping and waiting to thank both mayors.

Likewise, we hope any Metro board members considering a future run for mayor will appreciate the weight this vote carries in our community—and the weight our community's votes will carry when we support those who have supported us.

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011

A-12

LOS ANGELES SENTINEL

MTA must view Crenshaw subway in a regional context

Apr 28, 2011

[Damien Goodman](#) | OW Guest Contributor

Crenshaw Subway Coalition Chair & Fix Expo Campaign Coordinator

On May 26, the MTA board of directors will consider Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' motion to keep the entirety of the Crenshaw-LAX Light Rail Line underground on Crenshaw Blvd. and add a station at Leimert Park Village. The implications of the motion are significant.

While, it is of critical importance that the line is built underground on Crenshaw Boulevard in a manner that provides Park Mesa Heights merchants opportunity, not destruction, and provides travelers with the option to walk to Leimert Park Village, it is also important to view the rail line in the context of regional transportation.

The current Crenshaw-LAX project, from the future Expo Line Crenshaw station to the Green Line by way of LAX, is simply the first phase of the most significant north-south rail project in our county.

MTA's recently completed study/is currently studying extensions of the line all the way north to Hollywood, and deep into the south to the ports of San Pedro and Long Beach. The end product is a rapid transit option that will connect Hollywood, West Hollywood, Miracle Mile, Mid-City, the Crenshaw District, Inglewood, Westchester, El Segundo, Redondo Beach and Torrance all by one rail line to LAX, a train that will have transfer stations with four of the five east-west MTA rail lines.

The implications to the MTA system and regional transportation as a whole are huge.

In the South Bay, the line would provide an alternative to the I-405 Freeway. And in the north from Hollywood to the Expo Line, the line would have a total monopoly on high-speed transportation, because it would be 100 percent underground permitting trains to travel 55 mph between stations in a section of our region that has no freeway option. The result: traveling from Hollywood to LAX in a little over 30 minutes.

Ponder the thought.

The currently proposed median street-running segment in Park Mesa Heights from 48th to 59th streets would be the only impediment to fast reliable rail service for the entire

line. In this section the train would have to compete with an already overburdened roadway.

At the major intersection of Slauson/Crenshaw, MTA's own studies reveal that rush-hour congestion is at its worst possible level and cannot be improved with a street-level crossing. The train would also have to stop at signals and travel with no crossing gates. Of the nearly 900 accidents on MTA's street-level Blue Line, the deadliest light rail line in America, 76 percent of all accidents and 92 percent of all vehicular accidents are at crossings with no gates.

If one of the goals of the public investment is to convince travelers that they can make their flights on time by "Go[ing] Metro"—that they need not clog the city streets and 405 to get to LAX, then surely it is wise for MTA to avoid designs that are known to be problematic and create significant delays to passengers. By keeping the Crenshaw/LAX Line underground on Crenshaw Boulevard, the Ridley-Thomas motion would avoid these foreseeable problems.

There's no denying that the Ridley-Thomas motion is important to the preservation and enhancement of the Crenshaw community. But it is important for MTA to recognize that it is also important to constituents in other parts of the city and county, who seek fast reliable rail service to LAX and the heart of the region's African American community.

[Anthony Asadullah Samad, Ph.D.](#) | OW Contributing Columnist

Between the Lines

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) is set to take a key vote this week on the long-awaited Crenshaw-LAX rail transit line. A motion proposed by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas seeks to address serious deficiencies on the Crenshaw leg of the line, deficiencies that involve economic viability and public-safety concerns in our community.

A stop in Leimert Park Village could address the economic viability concern.

A subway tunnel from 48th Street to 60th Street would address both the issue of economic viability and public safety. One thing is clear, it is imperative that the community position be heard and supported. Failure to do so could cause commercial investment and economic development to move past our community as quickly as the train line they intend to build. We can't let that happen, so we must let our voices be heard this week.

Here's what's at stake: the current rail design that is set to begin as early as 2014 (a decade and a half earlier than the original start date of 2029) and was originally a proposed bus line, was set to stop at Crenshaw and King, then again at Crenshaw and Hyde Park, rolling past a prime, cultural and economic center in our community—Leimert Park Village.

Now, if you look at community cultural centers all over the city, public rail transit stops there. People would have to walk four or five blocks to get to Leimert Park, when a redesign would let them off one half block from the village. The community wants the Leimert Park stop, and they should have it.

The MTA staff recommendations do not take into consideration the community sentiment and merits of their position (they rarely do, but that's going to change). Numbers crunchers and bean counters can determine the infrastructure development of the Black community for the next 80 years to come. It isn't until we go down to MTA in mass organization and help them understand the community's position.

More critically is the issue of public safety, traffic congestion and economic suppression of businesses that will occur with a rail line running up the middle of Crenshaw before it peels off on Florence Boulevard. The current design is proposing the train runs at grade (street level), the Ridley-Thomas motion is proposing a subway tunnel under Crenshaw from 48th to 60th streets, near the Hyde Park stop, so that the following things don't

occur:

- the inability to cross Crenshaw because of the rail track barriers that prohibit left turns and discourage pedestrians from crossing;
 - the increase in gridlock that already paralyzes Crenshaw would be increased;
 - businesses along the Crenshaw/Hyde Park corridor would see a decrease in business because of the difficulties in reaching businesses along rail line corridors;
- lastly, the meridian currently dividing Crenshaw and decorated with palm trees and greenery would be uprooted for rail construction.

You know our community was the last to get landscaping in the city. Now, they want to take it out.

All the reason to listen to the community's request to go below grade or above grade (build a bridge like at LaCienega Boulevard and Rodeo Road). A subway design wouldn't cost any more than the proposed at grade if the redesign was incorporated before construction started. So there is time to do it.

Again, the community's voice must be heard. How we position ourselves on this mass transit infrastructure issue will speak volumes on how we impact the economic growth and prosperity of Leimert Park Village and the Hyde Park Business District. What we cannot allow is the underdevelopment of mass transit that tends to ghettoize urban communities.

Urban centers are designed around two things: schools and mass transit. Business comes where the transit stops, and homeowners come where the schools are. The money then follows both.

Until our community understands that mis-designing mass transit is a detriment to the economic development prospects of our community, we will never see the change we desire.

When we get it, they get it. We just have to show MTA the Crenshaw community now gets it and make they get it, too. We know what we want in our communities. With the community watchdogs and policy sophistication we have now, they'll never mis-design another rail system ... and that's a good thing.

Show up at 9 a.m. on Thursday, MTA Board Room, 1 Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles. Wear black shirts in unity and demand the support of a Leimert Park stop and a subway corridor on Crenshaw.

Anthony Asadullah Samad, Ph.D., is a national columnist, managing director of the Urban Issues Forum (www.urbanissuesforum.com) and author of the upcoming book, "Real Eyez: Race, Reality and Politics in 21st Century Popular Culture." He can be reached at www.AnthonySamad.com or on Twitter.com at @dranthonyamad.com.



Guest Editorial: Rail line must go underground to preserve, protect key Black L.A. business corridor

By DAMIEN GOODMON

Story Created: Apr 27, 2011 at 8:23 PM PDT

On Thursday, the MTA board of directors will be presented with an opportunity to approve Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' motion to keep the entirety of the Crenshaw-LAX Light Rail Line underground on Crenshaw Boulevard. The implications of the motion should concern every Angeleno, for the Crenshaw-LAX Line is a true regional rail project, and the Southland needs its last African-American business corridor.

The current Crenshaw-LAX project from the future Expo Line Crenshaw station to the Green Line by way of LAX is simply the first phase of perhaps the most significant north-south rail project for our region.

Just consider the Crenshaw-LAX Line extensions that have recently finished study or are currently under study, and one can view a rail line that soon after completion would produce the highest ridership of any light rail line in the country.

To the south, MTA has dedicated funding to extend the line deep into the South Bay to Torrance, along a route that parallels the 405 Freeway. Studies have been conducted to take the line even further south into San Pedro or Long Beach.

To the north, preliminary studies have been completed to extend the line to Wilshire to connect with the Subway to the Sea. Also, last year, MTA planning resources were dedicated to studying an extension of the line beyond Wilshire to the Hollywood/Highland Red Line station by way of West Hollywood (a project that is known as the Pink Line.)

Hollywood, West Hollywood, Miracle Mile, Mid-City, Crenshaw District, Inglewood, Westchester, El Segundo, Redondo Beach and Torrance all connected by one rail line to LAX, a line that would have transfer stations with four of the five east-west MTA rail lines. The implications to the MTA system and region as a whole are huge.

In the South Bay, the line would provide an alternative to the I-405 freeway. And in the north from Hollywood to the Expo Line, the line would have a total monopoly on high-speed transportation, because it would be 100% underground permitting trains to travel 55 mph between stations in a section of our region that has no freeway option. The result: Hollywood to LAX in a little over 30 minutes.

Imagine that.

The only impediment to fast, reliable rail service for this entire line is the median street-running segment in Park Mesa Heights from 48th Street to 59th Street. The regional line, serving Southern California's air traffic hub, would have to compete with an already overburdened roadway. Over 60,000 cars per day travel this portion of Crenshaw Boulevard, and at the major intersection of Slauson/Crenshaw, MTA's own studies reveal that rush hour congestion is at its worst possible level (Level of Service "F") and cannot be improved with a street-level crossing.

From 48th Street to 59th street, the train would have to stop at signals and travel with no crossing gates. Of the nearly 900 accidents on MTA's street-level Blue Line, America's deadliest light rail line, 76 percent of all accidents and 92 percent of all vehicular accidents are at crossings with no gates.

If one of the goals of the public investment is to convince travelers that they can make their flights on time by "Go[ing] Metro" — that they need not clog the city streets and 405 to get to LAX — surely it is wise to avoid designs that are known to be problematic and create significant delays to passengers.

The historic African-American Crenshaw corridor has been waiting for its rebirth since at least the civil unrest of 1992. There have been piecemeal public and private investments, but none so singularly significant as the Crenshaw-LAX light rail project. At \$1.7 billion, it is the largest public works project in the history of South Los Angeles.

In spite of all the challenges, Crenshaw merchants are still standing. In the Park Mesa Heights community institutions like Dulan's, Nobody Jones Boutique, Crenshaw Yoga and Margarita's Café remain, if in the case of some, only by the skin of their teeth.

Ridley-Thomas' motion would connect the two underground portions of the rail line, avoiding the safety hazards and business impacts of a street-level design between 48th Street to 59th Street in Park Mesa Heights.

To fit street-level tracks on Crenshaw in Park Mesa Heights, MTA would impose a variety of roadway changes that would transform the boulevard, which currently features pedestrian-friendly designs (coupled with a specific plan that requires new buildings to be built in a manner that is pedestrian-oriented) into a highway that is far more auto-centric.

MTA's street-level plan would make it harder for patrons to walk and drive to the mostly black-owned small businesses. The median lined with mature trees that contribute to Crenshaw Boulevard's scenic highway status would be wiped out, available parking

would be cut in half, and left turns at multiple intersections would be eliminated along with mid-block pedestrian crossings. A tremendous economic revitalization opportunity would be hampered. And the impact on current business with 4-5 long years of street-level construction is daunting.

Could Park Mesa Heights merchants withstand it?

It's highly doubtful. Far more stable business corridors succumbed in the best of economic times.

It would be a death to the last African-American business corridor in Southern California.

The plight of the Crenshaw business community should concern us all. If Los Angeles is a salad bowl filled with a mixture of cultures from throughout the world, Crenshaw must be the dressing. Our region should no more welcome the destruction of the Crenshaw business community than it should Little Tokyo or Chinatown. Crenshaw is as much a part of our unique identity as a multicultural city, as any other ethnic center. We must both preserve it and enhance it with the Crenshaw-LAX Light Rail Line.

The Crenshaw community is ready for the rebirth that will occur if MTA builds the Park Mesa Heights tunnel. With it will come not just a preserved cultural destination and better public transit, but also a stronger tax base for the region.

Goodmon is chair of the Crenshaw Subway Coalition Chair and coordinator of the Fix Expo Campaign.

Inglewood TODAY

Your Community Connection

MTA TO VOTE ON THE FATE OF THE CRENSHAW LINE SUBWAY & LEIMERT PARK VILLAGE STATION NEXT THURSDAY

Community Eye Featured Lead Story News — 23 April 2011

MTA TO VOTE ON THE FATE OF THE CRENSHAW LINE SUBWAY & LEIMERT PARK VILLAGE STATION NEXT THURSDAY

The vote on Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' motion at the April 28th MTA Board meeting will determine whether Southern California's last remaining African-American business community prospers or dies.



Los Angeles, CA – At next Thursday's MTA board meeting, board member and LA County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas will be offering a motion to address the two major remaining design issues for the proposed Crenshaw-LAX Light Rail, which is to be scheduled to begin construction next year: undergrounding the entirety of the Crenshaw Blvd portion of the rail line, and adding a station at historic Leimert Park Village.

Of the 8.5-mile \$1.6 billion line, which will add the Crenshaw District, Inglewood, Westchester and LAX to MTA's growing rail system, 2 of the 3 miles in the Crenshaw Blvd portion is proposed to be built underground in a subway. But community groups want the final mile, between 48th street to 59th street (known as the Park Mesa Heights segment), underground and the currently "optional" station at historic Leimert Park Village to be official. Ridley-Thomas' motion would require MTA staff to identify the estimated \$339 million necessary to include both options into the project, and proposes as potential resources currently uncommitted funds from the recently passed Measure R sales tax for transportation.

"This is the moment we've been working to get to for over 4 years," said Damien Goodman, coordinator of the Fix Expo/Crenshaw Subway Coalition. The coalition has

brought considerable attention to the rail safety, traffic and environmental disruption from street-level rail lines through their Fix Expo Campaign regarding the Downtown-to-Culver City Expo light rail line. Simultaneously, they've cautioned the board to avoid the mistakes of the Expo Line when building the Crenshaw Line.

"The rail safety issues on the Expo Line can also be seen on the Crenshaw Line," said Lester Hollins, a former MTA light rail operator and parent of a Crenshaw High School graduate. "If built at street-level the train will pass right in front of View Park Prep and just a block away from Crenshaw High School. We've already seen numerous children hit crossing Crenshaw Blvd. Adding a 225-ton train traveling 40 mph to the mix is like pouring fuel on a fire."

The economic impacts of street-level construction and operation on Crenshaw Blvd, an internationally recognized African-American residential and business community, are just as severe.

"This is the only remaining corridor of African-American small businesses in Southern California, and we're barely making as it is," said Jackie Ryan, past president of the Leimert Park Village Merchants Association. "Does MTA really want to be known as the agency that put the nail in the coffin of one of America's most noteworthy black business communities?"

"In addition to 4 to 5 years of destructive street-level construction between 48th and 59th streets, the current MTA plan would require equally devastating cut-and-cover construction on Crenshaw Blvd from 59th to the Harbor Subdivision tracks at 67th Street," said Clint Simmons, a retired JPL professional engineer. "If Ridley-Thomas' motion is adopted, a bored tunnel would be used the entirety on Crenshaw Blvd, minimizing surface level disruption."

Bored tunnel construction involves the placement of a large mining machine in a shaft at a station area, and mining between 30-60 feet below the street. Surface level disruption is limited to the location of the stations.

Ridley-Thomas' motion would also appropriate the resources necessary to make the currently "optional" Leimert Park Village station official.

"The businesses of Leimert Park Village, current and future, need a station at Vernon to allow all Crenshaw-LAX Line riders to easily access our village which is an international tourist destination and a cultural gem to Southern California," said Ryan. "Building a Crenshaw-LAX Line that does not have a stop at Leimert Park Village is like painting the Mona Lisa without a face."

"The choice before the MTA Board could not be more stark," said Goodman. "The MTA board can vote to effectively kill the last remaining African-American commercial corridor in Southern California by voting down the motion, or they can provide for the Crenshaw community the greatest opportunity for economic revitalization perhaps ever."